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## *Full Length Paper*

# A Typographic Analysis of Turkish Newspapers' Websites

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Any newspaper's graphic design is of great importance in attracting the attention of the reader and facilitating easy reading. It is important for the layout in an online newspaper graphic design not only to have integrity but also to be easy-to-use. For an online newspaper to be user-friendly is only possible if the reader can find and read what s/he looks for easily and comfortably. Typography is in this respect, the most important element in the online newspaper's graphic design as it is the art of situating typefaces on a two-dimensional surface. Typography thus ensures that writing pushes the limits of logic, keeps attention alive, caresses human spirit, infuriates, and excites. Therefore, the typography of an online newspaper should be *"simple, effective and deep"*.

The typography uses on the websites of some national newspapers in Turkey are examined in the research through comparative analysis emphasizing the importance of typography in online (cyber) journalism.

**Keywords:** Cyber Journalism; Screen Typography; Graphic Design; Legibility; Web Design.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the use of online newspapers is widespread. With the increase of online communication media, the necessity for online newspapers to be designed and produced by professionals, akin to print newspapers, has emerged. An online newspaper, unlike a print one, cannot be read by turning over its pages. It should be capable of presenting all its content on its main page and leading the reader until the last page s/he wants to access. While presenting all its content on its main page, an online newspaper should have a design that is as simple and easy-to-read as possible.

The most important element that constitutes a newspaper is text. The priority in both print and online environments is to attract the reader's attention. After attracting his/her attention, the reader should be able to find and read what s/he looks for. Readers of online newspapers are impatient. They do not like allocating much time to websites and reading at length. They would like to access and read what they want as soon as possible. Therefore, they would like to grasp the content of a text they encounter on the Internet at a single glance and to quickly determine if it is interesting or not. A research carried out on this issue demonstrates that only 16% of internet readers read a text word by word from beginning to end.

The main requirement of an online newspaper is a good planning. In order to convey the information, which is properly compiled, to the reader, it needs to be arranged and classified correctly and to be presented in an effective manner. The visual equilibrium between texts and

images is important in design. Colours, shapes and their layout should be balanced and attractive. The eye should be able to follow the movement on the web page according to the information flow without difficulty.

## **INTERNET AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL**

The Internet is a free communication environment, which is easy to use in terms of its content and features, economic and flexible in terms of place and time. When compared to the other communication tools, it reaches the target audience more easily. The newspapers also benefited from this environment which millions of people are using for communication and they increase their income through advertisements by keeping their target audience with news and comments.

As it can be seen in *www.internetworldstats.com* address, the Internet use is very high in some countries and very low in others. Turkey uses the Internet at a ratio below 50%, while Sweden uses at 92.5% ratio and Germany uses at 79.1%. According to Turkey Statistics Institution (TurkStat, 2010), the ratio of using the Internet in Turkey was 5.4% in 2002, 38.1% in 2009 and it increased to 41.6% in 2010. The 76% of these users are using the Internet for reading newspapers.

## **SOME PRINCIPLES FOR ONLINE NEWSPAPER DESIGN**

Online newspapers use articles, photos, illustrations and moving images in order to reach their target audience and reflect the content. The organization of the content affects the reader as well as the content. The newspaper should present the content with a design, which is as plain, clear, and not exhausting as possible. There are some principles for creating attractive, informative and visually attractive pages. The newspaper designer is expected to give importance to these principles.

Online newspaper readers are impatient and do not like reading long articles. "They want to comprehend the content of the article and images on the Internet" (Outing, 2004). Therefore, a balance should be established between the texts and images (Figure 1, see page 273). Arranging of the texts and the images quite randomly makes perception and communication difficult. Colors, shapes and their organization should be balanced and attractive. It should not be forgotten that once the text lose its communicative meaning, it moves away from its target.

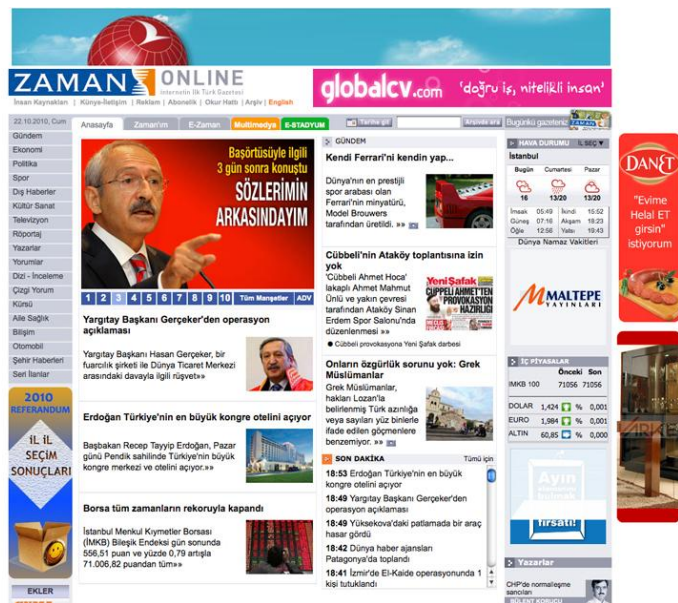


Figure 1: The balance should be established between the texts and images in the online newspapers. (Cumhuriyet and Zaman)

Online newspaper's being user-friendly depends on the readers' comprehension and reading comfortably. This is closely related to the typography, which is an important element in designing. Typography is an art of placing a text on an area effectively. "95% of the information on the web is written language. It is only logical to say that a web designer should get good training in the main discipline of shaping written information, in other words: Typography" (Coles, 2009). Typography is expected to push the logical limits, keep the attention awake, please the people and flutter. Thus, the motto of the web designer should be "*simple, active and deep*". Web sites should be "*simple/clear*" with their easy use and being perceived "*active*" with their effective and useful information; and "*deep*" with the answers to all questions and enthusiasm they create. "When you have a simple, plain, fresh environment, it gives you a great space to show your content for high impact and good, clean communication" (Hunt, 2009).

## Font Characters, Color and Page Layout

The variety of font characters should be in accordance with the needs. "In designing, using more than two font characters from different font families (sheriff, sheriff no, etc.) might create difficulties in comprehension" (Samara, 2007: 253). As each character will convey a different message, many font characters are risky. Script fonts are sympathetic with their handwriting styles; however they are difficult to read. Decorative fonts are illegible with their fancy structures. "Using bold, regular and italics versions of the same fonts on the same page may provide the expected richness" (Burger, 1993). It is easier to read screen fonts such as Geneva, Helvetica, Arial, Times and Courier. "Helvetica/Arial and their variations are nice fonts, but are rarely specified as they don't look quite as cool as Verdana" (Shannon, 2010). The unity among the pages may be provided with the font characters, colour and styles all together (Figure 9, see page 278).

The use of huge size words increases the number of words to be perceived. If they are too small,

then the letters are hardly recognized and illegible. “An average font size for 30-35 cm away from the screen should not be smaller than 9-11 fonts size (12-14 px)” (Pektaş, 2001: 72). Extra bold fonts are read with difficulty as the gaps of the letters are filled. The condensed fonts may cause the intertwining of the letters and the weaknesses of the gaps. Writing long texts in italics display the article as weak. A difficulty may be experienced while reading.

The left aligning of the passages makes the letter spacing more organized and prevents the occurrence of the white gaps. Particularly, it is ideal for narrow columns. Left and right justified or centred texts may cause problems creating unnecessary spaces, rivers (Figure 2). One of the most important problems in web pages is the length of the lines. If the lines are too short, the movement of the eye is distracted very often; however, if they are too long, then it is difficult for the eye to move to the next line, to scan accurately, it skips lines or reread the same line. In order to read comfortably, the number of letters and spaces should be about 40. This is equal to 6 words approximately.



Figure 2: Justified or centred texts may cause the following problems. (Afyon Haber)

It is the spaces that show the text and images on a web page. More spaces relax and enable comprehension easily. Less distance between text and image causes confusion; it makes the perception more difficult (Figure 5, see page 276). They distract the readers' attention. There should be 4mm space between the text and images. The excessive use of advertisements and their incompatibility with the page layout in online newspapers may make the reader exhausted and send the reader away. You can see it in many newspapers in Turkey. “The good sites have little to no advertising on the main page” (Rutledge, 2005).



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Color is one of the most important elements of web design. Identifiers are distinguished; they guide and help to express what is desired. They influence the reader and keep the attention alert. They attract the attention 40% more than white-black. Information could be presented more effectively due to the colors. For example, they have many functions like separating the heading from the text; attracting attention to the message and separating the information groups from each other. Though the colored web pages keep the attention awake, well-designed one-colored pages may also attract readers (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Well-designed one-colored pages may also attract the readers. (Gazetem)

Light colored texts should be preferred on dark colored areas (Figure 8, see page 278). "In terms of legibility, there should be at least 70% of tone difference between the fonts and background. Therefore, as an example, should the area be of 100 values, the fonts should not be more than 30 values" (Pektaş, 2001: 75). The fonts should not be less than 70 values if the area is 0 (zero). Contrast is one of the basic principles of design (Figure 4, see page 276). It helps a word or a sentence with high level of voice or low level of voice. To gain emphasis in a layout, there must necessarily be strong contrast between the elements. Contrast can be added in the design by changing the sizes, shapes, position, weights and colours (Magnik, 2010). It makes the perception easier: "on the layout, strong contrasts among the elements are required for the emphasis" (Baines and Haslam, 2005: 130).



Figure 4: Font and background. Contrast is one of the basic principles of design.

It should be predetermined what will be dominant in the size, shape, location and color (Figure 7, see page 277). The same emphasis indicates monotony (Figure 6, see page 277). Unnecessary frameworks and background color break the area into pieces; it causes confusion (Figure 5). If what is highlighted is not known, each colored strip, line or framework makes the page more complex.

## CONCLUSION

It is not really difficult to turn the simple into complex. There are many examples for this. What is important is to turn the complex into simple. The requirement of perception in communicating a simple and clear design is higher. Every designer should constantly search for more functional and more aesthetic in the designing of online newspapers.



Figure 5: Less distance between text and image causes confusion; it makes the perception more difficult. Unnecessary frameworks and background color break the area into pieces and cause confusion. (Körfezin Sesi)



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Figure 6: Two negative examples. The same emphasis indicates monotony. (Vakit/Haber Vaktim and Burası Çanakkale)

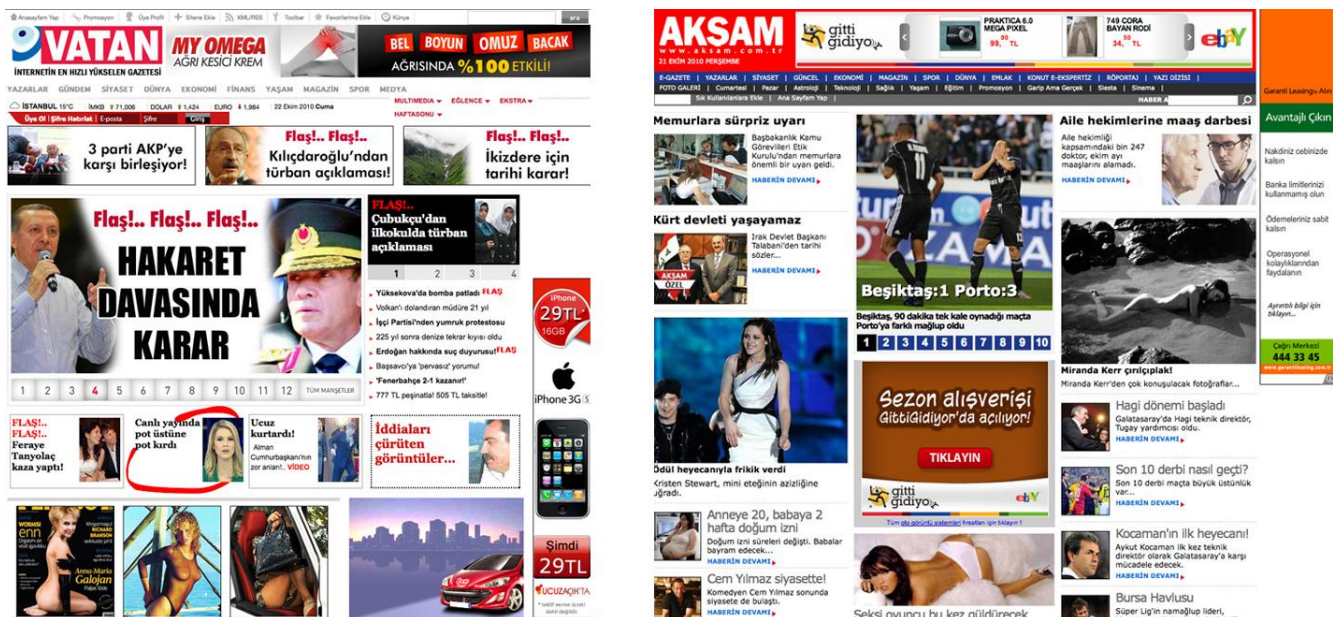


Figure 7: Two moderate examples. It should be predetermined what will be dominant in the size, shape, location and color. (Vatan and Akşam).



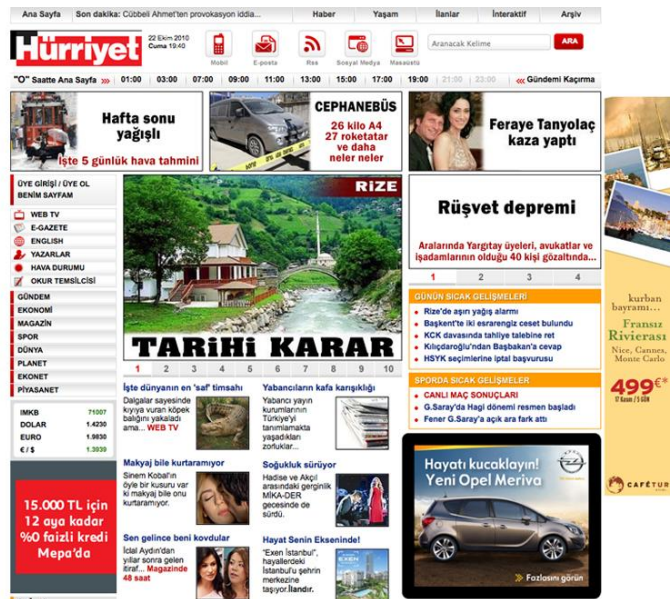
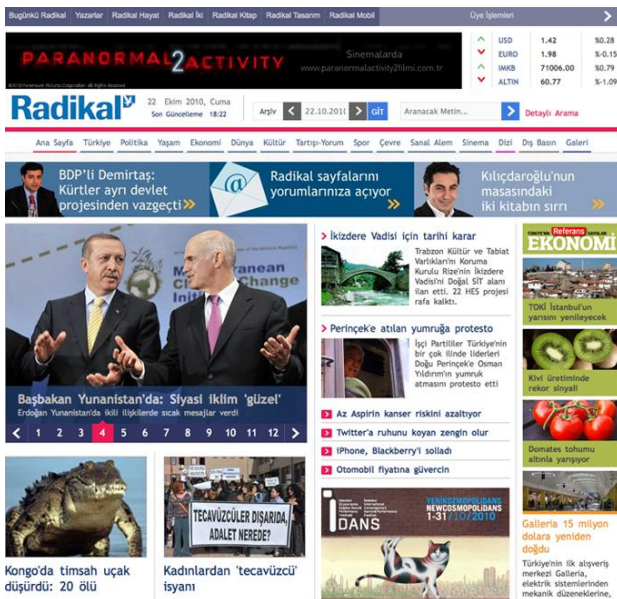


Figure 8: Two good examples. Light colored texts should be preferred on dark colored areas. (Radikal and Hürriyet)



Figure 9: The unity among the pages may be provided with the font characters, color and styles all together. (HaberTürk: main and inside pages).



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